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| **Press Release**  **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | Tim Jones | tim.jones@heartoftexashealthcare.org  325-597-2901 |

**Understanding Diabetes Risks and Prevention is Key to Health**

*The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need to take charge of your diabetes risk.*

BRADY, Texas (Nov. 2, 2020) – As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose a risk to the community, taking charge of your health is more important than ever. Those living with chronic conditions, including diabetes, are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. That is why knowing your risk of diabetes can help you take steps to improve your health.

“It is more important than ever to not delay the healthcare services you need to protect your health,” said Dr. Stephen Douglas Bell, Family Medicine physician at Brady Medical Clinic, a service of Heart of Texas Healthcare System. “Your provider can order a simple blood test to determine whether you have diabetes or at risk.”

Diabetes mellitus is a disease that causes the pancreas to alter the production of insulin - an important hormone that converts sugar and starches into energy the body needs. If the pancreas cannot produce enough insulin, then the amount of sugar in the blood rises uncontrollably, causing a deadly health risk.

Statistics show that diabetes is reaching epidemic rates, affecting an estimated 9.4 percent of Americans. Approximately 11.2 percent of Texans are currently living with the disease.

Although there is no data to suggest individuals with diabetes are more likely to contract COVID-19 compared to those without, studies have shown that those with diabetes are more likely to face worse outcomes if they contract the virus.

Symptoms of diabetes often include excessive thirst, frequent urination, drowsiness, itching, blurred vision, excessive weight, tingling in the extremities, fatigue, and skin infections. Other signs include slow healing of cuts and scratches, especially those on the feet.

Managing diabetes is possible through a healthy and balanced diet, exercise, and medication.

Diabetes can be discovered with a blood test. This screening can help your medical provider determine what stage of the disease you have and how you can maintain optimum health.

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There are three primary types of diabetes: Type 1, Type 2, and gestational. Type 1 diabetes is typically diagnosed in children and young adults. Affecting only five percent of people with diabetes, this type affects those whose bodies do not produce insulin. Unlike other forms of diabetes, Type 2 diabetes, the most common type, is largely preventable through healthy lifestyle choices.

Prediabetes is a condition in which individuals have higher than normal blood sugar levels but not high enough to be classified as diabetic. Those with prediabetes are likely to eventually develop diabetes if they do not commit to lifestyle changes such as increased exercise and an improved diet.

People at the highest risk of diabetes are frequently overweight, have diabetic relatives or are over age 35. Statistics also show that women are at a higher risk for diabetes, as are those with a family history of the disease.

As with other diseases and illnesses, everyone can benefit from a yearly physical. Screening for diabetes for those who fall in the high-risk categories should be done annually.

“Protecting your health starts with knowing where you stand,” Dr. Bell said. “Understanding your risk can help you take the steps you need to take charge of your health.”

To learn more about local healthcare services or to schedule a wellness exam at Brady Medical Clinic, please call 325-597-2114.

**About Heart of Texas Healthcare System**Heart of Texas Healthcare System provides healthcare for residents of McCulloch County and the surrounding area. Founded in 2011, the system offers a wealth of medical services, including 24-hour emergency care, advanced radiology services, a clinical laboratory, dialysis services, physical therapy, surgical services, patient education, sleep studies, and more. The system also owns and operates Brady Medical Clinic, which provides family medicine, preventive care, and acute care for minor emergencies. For additional information, please visit www.heartoftexashealthcare.org.

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